

Notes

RI Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) Advisory Committee

September 10, 2013 @ RI RRC – Johnston, RI - 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

I. Draft Plan Review

Sarah Kite of RRC started the meeting by updating the group on the comments they received from the Advisory Committee on the draft plan outline and vision statement. The updated vision statement has been incorporated into the first draft of Section One of the SWMP. Changes were also made to the plan outline – most notably the addition of a section on environmental concerns, as requested by committee member Pam Sherrill. It was also noted that Eugenia Marks expressed a concern that the vision for the plan extended to the 22nd century – she wanted to make sure we were addressing actionable items today and in the nearer term. Sarah explained that the long term vision is indeed over the next many decades and represents something to strive toward, but that this plan will absolutely include specific and attainable strategies for the nearer term.

Mike McGonagle of RRC continued by showing some slides summarizing the content of the initial drafts of Sections 1 & 2 of the SWMP. Mike took comments and questions from the committee throughout the presentation, summarized below. All additional comments from the committee should be sent to Jeff Davis (jeff.davis@doa.ri.gov) no later than Friday, September 20.

- It would probably be worthwhile to have a full glossary of terms in the appendices.
- Why has the state not done a Waste Characterization Study yet? Are there any barriers?
 - There are no barriers, per se, except time and cost. RRC will definitely be doing a study in the near future. It will take approximately 18 months from start to finish. The biggest decision is methodology – will they catalogue every piece of trash in a sampling of waste bags (and sort them into various classes)? Or will they only pull out certain items such as organics, packaging, etc.? The last characterization study was to establish potential BTU values as part of the research for a potential Waste to Energy plant. Today, such a study can help RRC address issues of capacity and help set realistic targets for municipal recycling rates, etc.
- A great deal of discussion was had around Table 2: Estimates of Current and Potential Recovery for Refuse by Source (page 10 of the current draft plan).
 - The assumptions include commercial and residential combined
 - There was general concern that the assumed recovery percentages would be perceived as the State's long term goals (which, as such, were considered by the committee to be too low). In fact, this table should be considered as a tool that can help the state determine what infrastructure and capacity it needs (both at RRC and the private sector) to meet certain recycling targets.

In the shorter term, it can help set realistic targets within current capacity. And in the longer term, if the state chooses to aim for a vision of 90 or 95% recovery, this table can help determine the increase in capacity and facilities we'd need to get there.

- Along these lines, the heading of the final column should NOT say “Full Potential Recovery,” as this implies that 55% recovery is the most the state is striving for.
- It may be that this Table is not appropriate in this section of the plan, but should come later on. It can be used to describe several future scenarios, from using only the capacity and facilities we currently have, to making additional investments to get higher recovery, to the ideal of as near to zero waste as we can get.
- This discussion spurred another idea related to the future of our existing facilities: what of our transfer stations and other solid waste infrastructure are vulnerable to climate change, sea level rise, increased flooding, etc.? Can we plan to site new facilities to avoid vulnerable areas? Likewise, and more broadly, we should be careful not to get locked into our current paradigms, as the environment we're working in is dynamic.
- It might also be interesting to analyze the recovery potential if the state were able to fully and effectively enforce all of its existing laws and regulations related to solid waste (i.e. 100% yard waste recovery).
- The committee reiterated the dual nature of the SWMP. On the one hand, it needs to be practical and serve as concrete guidance for solid waste management as we approach the closing of the Central Landfill in approximately 20 years. On the other hand, it still has to be aspirational, and guide the state beyond the next 20 years. Much of our success depends on a cultural shift in values among all Rhode Islanders, and the longer term vision of this plan can help point the way for this shift.
- The group has a few comments for the Who Does What? section.
 - A section should be added on the roles of manufacturers.
 - Consumer/resident responsibility should be added.
 - Whether here or in another section, it might be valuable to include a gap analysis: what roles do we need to be filled that no one is currently filling?
- Are there national data or standards for disposal price setting?
 - Mike M. says that he is unaware of any good data.
- Does RRC have a way of calculating how their commercial pricing impacts their business load?
 - Yes, RRC tracks its closest competitors in CT and MA and has a pretty good sense as to how to set their pricing to control demand.

II. Existing and Expected Outreach

Advisory Committee members received a list of individuals and groups that RRC and DEM have reached out to so far regarding the update of the SWMP. The list includes all of the people who received informational letters about the planning process, as well as groups that RRC and DEM have standing meetings with that can be used as engagement for the plan.

Rhode Island College responded positively to the informational letter, and has offered free meeting space for the plan's regional public forums.

RRC is also working to set up a meeting with the members of the RI League of Cities and Towns, and has been offered a session at January's RILOCAT conference to present on the plan. A broad overview of the plan and process will also be provided to a working group of the Food Policy Council.

Committee members are asked to review the outreach list and let us know if there is anyone else we should engage. This list will serve as the baseline for invitations to the public forums. Initial thoughts on additions included:

- All other colleges and universities in the state.
- RI Nursery & Landscape Association
- Members of the Providence Sustainability Round Table

III. Regional Forums

Jeff Davis explained the concept for the public forums being planned for November. They will be held in four regions around the state: Northern (Woonsocket) November 6, Southern (Narragansett) November 7, Newport County (Newport) November 12, and Central (Providence) November 14. Each will be held from 4-6pm. The general format will start with an open house during which people can look at boards with charts, graphs and other info, pick up literature on recycling and composting, take surveys, etc. This will be followed by a presentation from RRC based on the presentation given to the Advisory Committee in May. Finally, we will have Trash Talk with Sarah Kite – an open mic opportunity for people to ask all of their burning questions about trash.

Mike M. prepared a table with information about each forum, including the specific objectives, questions to ask, and target audiences. The committee members are asked to review this and provide any additional thoughts. They are also asked to comment on the draft flyer for the events, and help spread the word. Additional items such as forum agendas, surveys, etc. will be e-mailed to the Advisory Committee for review in advance.

IV. Next Steps

RRC and SPP prepared revised timelines for the project and distributed them to the committee. This includes a schedule of when the various draft sections of the SWMP will be ready for committee review.

The next Advisory Committee meeting will be Tuesday, December 10. At that time, we will review the changes made to Sections 1 & 2, review the first draft of Section 3, and debrief the regional forums. Based on the feedback received at the forums, the committee will discuss which topics they would like to host specific meetings around, such as composting, waste to energy, producer responsibility, etc.

The committee reconfirmed that Tuesdays at 9am are generally good for them. Remaining meeting are:

December 10

March 4

June 10

September 9

The Solid Waste Management Plan web page on the Division of Planning website can be found at:

<http://www.planning.ri.gov/statewideplanning/land/solidwaste.php>